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ABSTRACT

An instrument for measuring teacher attitudes toward reading and the teaching of reading and for relating reading attitudes and achievement within teachers was constructed with 15 concepts measured on ten scales. In 1974, the instrument and a reading achievement test were administered to 317 final-year elementary school student teachers in five teachers' colleges. In 1976, the same instruments were administered again, this time to 289 final-year elementary school student teachers in two colleges. In general, the 1976 study confirmed the 1974 findings. Specifically, the results showed the following: the relationship between reading attitude and achievement within teachers did not appear to be strong; positive attitudes toward teaching reading appeared to be unrelated to reading achievement; attitudes associated with positive valuations of reading, the teaching of reading, and literature were linked together; female teachers showed both higher achievement and more favorable reading attitudes than did males; self-concept appeared to be unrelated to reading achievement, but teachers with higher self-concepts appeared to have more favorable attitudes toward their own reading, the teaching of reading, and the pupil than did teachers with lower self-esteem; and personal adjustment appeared positively related to positive valuations of reading and the teaching of reading in both sexes. (FL)

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ATTITUDES TOWARDS READING AND THE TEACHING OF READING IN FINAL YEAR STUDENT TEACHERS[1]

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INTRODUCTION

Despite massive research efforts which have been conducted in the area of children's reading, some confusion and much controversy still pervade the practice of teaching reading. The teacher of reading, while continuing to be regarded as a most significant influence on reading progress, continues to be a relatively neglected variable.

Not surprisingly, there is some evidence that teachers vary markedly in their effectiveness in promoting reading achievement gains in their pupils (14, 24). There are, too, some tentative indications that teachers' attitudes to reading may be related to pupil achievement (14, 3). Most frequently, evidence of teacher impact is drawn from the numerous comparative studies of different methods, materials or classroom organization for teaching reading, where a greater variation within a particular method than between different methods is the common finding. Thus it is frequently claimed that the teacher is the significant factor in promoting reading achievement not a particular method (or whatever) (18, 2, 5, 10). The present writers would suggest that this argument rests on an unwarranted statistical inference which defines the large unexplained within-method variance as teacher influence. However, although this inference is statistically indefensible, the present authors would certainly defend its psychological plausibility, that is, the probability that a large proportion of this unexplained variance may well be accounted for by variations in teacher as well as pupil qualities. But this postulate requires empirical demonstration.

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[1] Paper for the Annual Conference of the Australian Reading Association, September, 1977.

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Relationship between Attitude and Achievement in Reading

Recently much has been written about the importance of attitude in the acquisition of reading skills. Koe (12) asserted "If we want the teaching of reading to count, negative attitudes towards this potent skill must be changed". Agin (1) in her overview of recent reading research also emphasized the importance of interest, attitudes and motivation. Pointing to the general agreement among writers in the field that "teachers are the main difference in the reading process", she goes on to maintain that "the attitude of the teacher is the main ingredient.....(in) getting children to read" (p. 372).

Hubbard and Salt (11) also emphasized the importance of attitude, pointing to a recent widening of interest from the more specifically perceptual factors to the social factors, which are also associated with the complex process of learning to read.

Stott (22) spoke of the "assumption of perceptual error" (p. 375). He suggested that as reading so obviously involves perceptual processes, much of the research into reading failure has been concentrated (inappropriately, he would argue) on perceptual variables. Stressing both the interdependence of motivational and cognitive variables and the importance of motivational factors as "prime-movers", he maintained that "if a child has no interest in discerning similarities and regularities ..... the precise level of his power to form associations and to make generalizations is irrelevant" (p.382). That it, the child, who is a reading failure may not be deficient in certain areas of cognitive functioning but simply does not reach the point at which he attempts to exercise the appropriate cognitive processes.

The empirical evidence to support the growing conviction (and common

assumption) that children's attitude to reading significantly affects achievement in reading is sparse but generally positive. While the research literature on children's attitude towards and achievement in reading is sparse, the research literature on the effect of teacher attitudes towards reading on pupil attitudes and achievement is virtually non-existent. However, a chain of conviction and implied assumption can be discerned in the literature causally connecting teachers' attitudes towards reading to pupil attitudes towards reading to pupil achievement in reading. However, at no stage in the chain of argument is there sufficient evidence to support these assumptions.

While our long-term objective in this complex area of research is to relate teacher attitudes towards reading to pupil attitudes and achievement in reading, thus far the project has reached the stage of (i) constructing an instrument to measure teacher attitudes towards reading and the teaching of reading; and (ii) relating reading attitudes and achievement within teachers.

In the first half of 1974 the authors constructed an instrument for measuring attitudes associated with reading and the teaching of reading. The semantic differential was used as it is recognized as an indirect instrument for tapping attitudes and hence less open to faking a "good" response. It also allows for the inclusion of qualitative content to the concept of reading. The instrument was constructed initially with fifteen concepts measured on ten scales (see Table 1). These scales were chosen as they have commonly been found to load highly on the evaluative dimension. Factor analysis subsequently confirmed this assumption.

PROCEDURE

In November 1974 this instrument together with A.C.E.R.'s well-established reading achievement test was administered to 317 final year primary school student teachers in five Victorian Teachers Colleges, approximately 30% of the combined total final year population for those colleges. The response varied considerably over colleges from 64% in one college to 6% in another.[1] The effects of response sets are uncertain and sample generalisability is probably unwarranted. However, the sample achieved did closely resemble its parent population on age distribution and sex-breakdown. Furthermore, as the types of analyses carried out were substantially correlational, there is evidence to suggest these may be less likely to change markedly with a different sample.[2] (20, 23)

In November 1976 the same instruments were again administered to final year primary school student teachers, this time from two Victorian colleges. The 1976 sample of 289 was made up of approximately 80% of the total final year population from one college and approximately 24% from the other.[3]

In both 1974 and 1976 all testing took place within colleges and was towards the end of the final year of training. Verbal and written instructions were standardized and followed strictly at each college. In each case data from all colleges were combined and analyzed.

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[1] College staff arranged and administered the testing sessions in the presence of one author.

[2] Repeat testing in 1976 supported the position.

[3] College based test arrangements placed control response beyond authors.

RESULTS

The ten responses to the SD were factor analyzed to explore whether the ten scales were measuring a single dimension. Table 1 shows the factor loadings for the ten scales. Both Principal Components and Varimax rotations yielded one factor accounting in 1974 for 60.03% and in 1976 62.3% of the common variance. All loadings range between .72 to .83.

TABLE 1

As the ten scales of the SD appeared to be measuring a single evaluative dimension the raw data were then re-analyzed in two ways. The first analysis was that commonly associated with SD data notably the distance measures between concepts and which were obtained using the Multivariate D^2 program; an example would be the distance between the concepts "Myself" and "The Teacher When Teaching Reading". Six such distance measures were used to operationally define attitudes toward reading and the teaching of reading.

SD data is usually analyzed in terms of these distance measures, but this approach does not differentiate between persons who may have rated a particular pair of concepts high or low. For this reason in the second analysis, a single evaluation score (i.e. the summed ratings on the ten 7-point scales) was calculated for each concept. Thus an indication of whether a concept was rated high or low was obtained. Four such evaluation scores were used additionally to operationally define attitudes to reading and its teaching.

Achievement Test

The reading achievement test (A.C.E.R.'s Co-Op Y Reading Comprehension Test) provided four scores for vocabulary, speed, level of comprehension and a total reading score.

FINDINGS

In terms of the major areas of interest in both these investigations, that is, the relationship between attitude and achievement and the inter-relationship of attitudes towards reading and its teaching, there was good consistency between the 1974 and 1976 findings.

However, while sex differences of reading attitude and achievement were not marked in 1974, highly significant sex differences were evident from the 1976 data. In view of this discrepancy between the 1974 and 1976 data and in view of the relatively small number of males on both occasions (36 out of 317 in 1974 and 62 out of 281 in 1976) we shall limit the discussion on the relationship between reading achievement and attitude and on the inter-relationship between attitude measures to the much larger group of female students.

Subsequently we will discuss sex differences, the relationship between self-concept and reading achievement and attitude and finally, the relationship between personal adjustment and reading achievement and attitude.

ATTITUDE AND ACHIEVEMENT

Table 2 gives the within cell correlations between the four reading achievement measures and the ten measures used to operationally define attitude to reading (that is, four SD evaluation scores and six SD distance measures).

TABLE 2

Overall the relationship between reading attitude and achievement was not strong in either 1974 or 1976. However, there are a number of significant correlations which showed relatively good consistency over both years. In particular a positive evaluation of "My Reading" was associated

with higher achievement in all reading measures in both '74 and '76. In 1974 and 1976 the SD evaluation of "My Reading" correlated .30 and .29 respectively with the total reading score, .38 and .30 with the Vocabulary and .24 and .32 with reading speed for the respective years. In both years the relationship between a favourable evaluation of My Reading and Comprehension was low but significant if pairs of variables are considered separately.

While a positive evaluation of literature was associated with a better vocabulary in 1974 (with a correlation of .30), this was not the case in 1976.

Of the SD distance measures, in 1974 only one - the distance between My Reading and Worthwhile Activities - showed a significant correlation with Vocabulary (.28). That is, teachers with better vocabularies tended to view their own reading as close to Worthwhile Activities. In 1976 the distance measure My Reading/Worthless Activities was significantly related to Reading Speed (.26). That is, compared with slow readers, fast readers tended to place a greater distance between their own reading and worthless activities.

These correlations do not suggest a close relationship between attitude and achievement within teachers. Even so, the 1974 finding that compared with low achievers, high achievers in reading tend to place a higher evaluation on their own reading received a further confirmation from the 1976 data. The lack of relationship between reading achievement and attitudes towards the teaching of reading evident among student teachers in the 1974 data was again evident in 1976.

achievement

Although the link between reading/and attitude was not strong in either group of student teachers, there were significant and substantial correlations between many of the attitude measures.

Table 3 shows the within cell correlation matrix of reading-related distance measures for 1974 and 1976. In both years, teachers who viewed their reading as close to themselves also viewed it as close to worthwhile activities (.53 in 1974 and .51 in 1976). They saw teaching reading as close to themselves (.51 in 1974 and .38 in 1976) and in 1974 as close to worthwhile activities (.25).

TABLE 3

Again in both years student teachers who viewed themselves as close to the teacher when teaching reading also viewed teaching reading as a worthwhile activity (.47 in 1974 and .36 in 1976). Those who viewed their own reading as close to worthwhile activities placed a similar value on the teaching of reading (.28 in '74 and .42 in '76). Similarly, in both groups of teachers, those who placed a greater distance between their own reading and worthless activities placed a greater distance between teaching reading and worthless activities (.58 in '74 and .73 in '76). One perplexing finding in 1976 was the positive relationship of .28 between the distance measure "Myself/My Reading and Teaching Reading/Worthless Activities".

Overall these correlations suggest a good internal consistency within the semantic differential data analyzed in terms of distance measures. There was, too, a good consistency between the 1974 and 1976 findings.

This type of consistency was also evident with the alternative method of analysis - evaluation scores. Table 4 shows the within cell correlation matrix of the SD evaluation score attitude measures.

TABLE 4

Teachers who tended to rate "My Reading" highly also tended to place a higher valuation on "Literature" (.43 in 1974 and .37 in 1976) and the "Teacher when Teaching Reading" (.22 in 1974 and .25 in 1976) and "Library" (.22 in both '74 and '76). With the exception of the correlation with literature, these correlations are low but significant with p .01 if pairs of variables are considered separately. Teachers who positively valued "The Teacher when Teaching Reading" tended also to positively value "Literature" (.25 in 1974 and .41 in 1976). While a positive evaluation of the reading teacher was not significantly related to a similar evaluation of "Library" in 1974, it was in 1976 with a correlation figure of .32.

SEX DIFFERENCES

While the 1976 results provided a satisfactory confirmation of the 1974 results on the relationship between reading attitude and achievement, and on the inter-relationship between reading-related attitude measures, significant sex differences evident in 1976 provided a marked contrast with the 1974 data.

TABLE 5

Table 5 shows sex differences on reading achievement and attitude measures for both years. In the '74 study there were no significant sex differences on reading achievement. In marked contrast in 1976, there were significant differences between the sexes on all four reading achievement measures (that is, vocabulary, reading speed, comprehension and total reading scores) with females showing superior performance in each case.

In 1976 there were significant sex differences on all the SD evaluation score reading attitude measures, with female student teachers showing a more positive attitude towards their reading, the teacher when teaching reading, literature and library. In addition, female student teachers viewed the school pupil more favourably. In 1974, by contrast, attitude towards literature was the only SD evaluation score which elicited a significant sex difference, again with female teachers showing a more positive attitude.

In contrast, there is a considerable degree of consistency between the 1974 and 1976 results on attitudes towards reading and its teaching as defined by the SD distance measures. There were no significant sex differences except on the distance measure "The Teacher when Teaching Reading" and "Worthless Activities". That is, in both 1974 and 1976, compared with male teachers, female teachers tended to view the teaching of reading as further from worthless activities.

SELF CONCEPT IN RELATION TO READING ATTITUDE AND ACHIEVEMENT

Table 6 shows the within cell correlations of self-concept (as operationally defined by the SD evaluation score for "Myself") with reading achievement and reading-related attitude measures for 1974 and 1976 separately for males and females.

TABLE 6

In both years the self-concept of neither male or female teachers appeared related to reading achievement. However, in both 1974 and 1976 there were significant relationships between self-concept and positive evaluations of reading.

Irrespective of sex or year, self-concept appeared significantly and

quite substantially related to a positive evaluation of reading with correlations ranging from .28 to .46. That is, there was a consistent tendency for high self-concept teachers to place a higher valuation on their own reading and in 1976 this tendency was more marked for males than for females.

Higher self-concept teachers tended also to place a higher valuation on the teaching of reading (with positive correlations ranging from .14 to .34) but this tendency was more evident in the 1974 group that in the 1976 student teachers tested.

Interestingly, in 1976 while female self-concept appeared unrelated to a positive evaluation of literature and library, male self-concept appeared significantly and quite substantially related to favourable attitudes towards these concepts with correlations of .38 for literature and .39 for library. A similar tendency was evident in 1974 but the sex differences were not so marked.

Compared with low self-concept teachers, high self-concept teachers of both sexes viewed the school pupil more favourably (with correlations of .35 and .31). In 1976 this tendency was not as strong, particularly for male teachers.

PERSONAL ADJUSTMENT IN RELATION TO READING ATTITUDE AND ACHIEVEMENT

Table 7 shows the within cell correlations of personal adjustment (as operationally defined by the semantic difference between Myself and My Ideal Self) with four reading achievement measures and six reading attitude distance measures for male and female teachers. Data on personal adjustment was not obtained in 1974 so these correlations refer only to the 1976 sample.

TABLE 7

Overall there were the expected low negative[1] correlations between the personal adjustment score and reading achievement measures, although the correlation between male adjustment and reading speed was the only one which reached the minimum level of statistical significance.

As with self-concept, there were a number of significant and at times substantial, correlations between personal adjustment and attitudes reading. Compared with poorly adjusted teachers, well-adjusted teachers saw their own reading and the teaching of reading as close to themselves and this was particularly so for females (with correlations of .51 and 36 respectively for reading and its teaching). There was a tendency, too, for well-adjusted teachers of both sexes to view their own reading and the teaching of reading as close to worthwhile activities. Particularly in the case of the proximity between my reading and worthwhile activities this tendency was substantially stronger for males with a correlation of .51.

CONCLUSIONS

An instrument for measuring attitudes associated with reading and the teaching of reading has been constructed and tested on two occasions. The instrument employs the semantic differential technique giving it some resistance to distortion by the social desirability of response. It allows for the inclusion of qualitative content to the notion of reading as well as a measure of self-concept and personal adjustment. Factor analytic techniques revealed that the ten scales employed were measuring a single evaluative dimension which in turn suggests that these scales remained stable over concepts. The instrument demonstrates a good degree of internal consistency over two different ways of analyzing the same data and with two independent samples.

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[1] Negative, as adjustment was distance between self and ideal self, and the smaller that distance the greater the assumed adjustment.

In general, the 1976 study provided a satisfactory confirmation of the 1974 results.

1. The relationship between reading attitude and achievement within teachers does not appear to be strong. Although there appears to be a consistent tendency for teachers who showed comparatively more favourable attitudes to their own reading to have somewhat better vocabularies, higher levels of comprehension and to be faster readers.

2. The 1974 finding that positive attitudes towards teaching reading appear unrelated to reading achievement also received confirmation in 1976.

3. In 1976 as in 1974 attitudes associated with positive valuations of reading, teaching reading and literature were linked together under the umbrella of worthwhile activities. That is, those who valued the one, tended also to value the others and vice versa.

4. While sex differences were not marked in 1974, there were highly significant differences between the sexes on the four reading achievement measures and on all the evaluation-scored reading attitudes measures, with female teachers showing both higher achievement and more favourable attitudes in each case. There was, however, consistency between the 74 and 76 findings in relation to the SD distance measures: with the exception of the worth of teaching reading measure there were no significant sex differences in either year.

5. While self-concept appeared unrelated to reading achievement, there was a consistent tendency for teachers with higher self-concepts to have more favourable attitudes towards their own reading, to the teaching of reading and to the school pupil than teacher of lower self-esteem.

6. Finally, personal adjustment in the 1976 sample, appeared positively and in some cases substantially related to positive valuations of reading and the teaching of reading in both sexes.

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TABLE 1 : PRINCIPAL COMPONENTS AND VARIMAX ROTATION OF SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL RESPONSES (IDENTICAL SOLUTIONS)

	1974	1976
Sweet-Sour	0.80	0.78
Glad-Sad	0.82	0.83
Fast-Slow	0.72	0.72
Weak-Strong	-0.78	-0.80
Good-Bad	0.82	0.83
First-Last	0.83	0.85
Before-Behind	0.79	0.81
Active-Passive	0.73	0.76
Below-Above	-0.75	-0.78
Poor-Rich	-0.75	-0.75

TABLE 2 : WITHIN CELL CORRELATION BETWEEN READING ACHIEVEMENT AND READING RELATED ATTITUDE MEASURES.

COMPARISON BETWEEN 1974 AND 1976. FEMALE ONLY

Attitude Measure	Correlation with Reading Achievement							
	1974 (N = 284)				1976 (N = 219)			
SD Evaluation	Vocab.	Speed	Compreh.	Total	Vocab.	Speed	Compreh.	Total
My Reading	.38	.24	.18	.30	.30	.32	.21	.29
Teaching Reading	-.02	-.05	-.01	-.02	.04	.06	.07	.08
Literature	.30	.17	.16	.24	.1	.01	.03	.04
Library	.04	.03	.04	.04	.04	.03	.04	.03
SD Distance								
Me/My Reading	-.05	.00	-.05	-.04	-.06	-.02	-.0[illegible]	-.05
Me/Teaching Reading	.00	.01	-.03	-.01	.05	.07	.04	.04
My Reading/Worthwhile	-.28	-.15	-.14	-.21	-.12	-.06	-.06	-.07
My Reading/Worthless	.07	.07	.04	.07	.17	.26	.12	.21
Teaching Reading/Worthwhile	-.05	.01	-.06	.04	-.09	.02	.09	-.08
Teaching Reading/Worthless	-.12	-.09	-.05	-.09	.00	.05	-.02	.01

TABLE 3

WITHIN CELL CORRELATIONS OF READING ATTITUDE MEASURES: SD DISTANCE MEASURES
(Female Final Year Student Teachers, 1974 N = 281, 1976 N = 219)

	1		2		3		4		5	
	1974	1976	1974	1976	1974	1976	1974	1976	1974	1976
Me/My Reading	XX	XX								
Me/Teaching Reading	.51	.38	XX	XX						
My Reading/Worthwhile Activities	.53	.51	.23	.18	XX	XX				
My Reading/Worthless Activities	.21	.11	.16	.17	-.01	-.04	XX	XX		
Teaching Reading/Worthwhile Activities	.25	.19	.47	.36	.28	.42	.16	.13	XX	XX
Teaching Reading/Worthless Activities	.19	.28	.17	.16	.15	.16	.58	.73	.08	-.06

TABLE 4

WITHIN CELL CORRELATIONS OF READING ATTITUDE MEASURES: SD EVALUATION SCORES
(female only, 1974 N = 281, 1976 N = 219)

	My Reading		Teaching Reading		Literature	
	1974	1976	1974	1976	1974	1976
My Reading	XX	XX	-	-	-	-
Teaching Reading	.22	.25	XX	XX	-	-
Literature	.43	.37	.25	.41	XX	XX
Library	.22	.22	.13	.32	.21	.37

TABLE 5

SEX DIFFERENCES ON READING ATTITUDE AND ACHIEVEMENT:
1974 (36M, 281F) and 1976 (62M, 219F)

VARIABLE	1974 P*	1976 P*
Reading Achievement		
Vocabulary	NS	.03
Speed	NS	.06
Comprehension	NS	.001
Total	NS	.003
Reading Attitude		
SD Evaluation Scores:		
My Reading	NS	.008
Teaching Reading	NS	.001
Literature	.02	.001
Library	NS	.008
School Pupil	NS	.02
SD Distance Measures		
Me/My Reading	NS	NS
Me/Teaching Reading	NS	NS
My Reading/Worthwhile Activities	NS	NS
My Reading/Worthless Activities	NS	NS
Teaching Reading/Worthwhile Activities	NS	NS
Teaching Reading/Worthless Activities	.001	.02

* Significant differences in favour of females always

TABLE 6

WITHIN CELL CORRELATIONS BETWEEN SELF-CONCEPT AND READING ATTITUDE AND ACHIEVEMENT MEASURES: 1974 & 1976

VARIABLE	CORRELATION WITH SELF-CONCEPT			
	1974		1976	
	Female N = 281	Male N = 36	Female N = 219	Male N = 67
Reading Achievement	.03	.10	.07	.05
Reading Attitude				
SD Evaluation Scores:				
My Reading	.37	.34	.28	.46
Teaching Reading	.34	.25	.14	.20
Literature	.13	.20	.08	.38
Library	.15	.33	.05	.39
School Pupil	.35	.31	.24	.12

TABLE 7

WITHIN CELL CORRELATIONS BETWEEN PERSONAL ADJUSTMENT AND READING ATTITUDE AND ACHIEVEMENT: 1976

VARIABLE	CORRELATION WITH ADJUSTMENT*	
	Female N = 219	Male N = 62
Reading Achievement		
Vocabulary	-.11 ns	-.14 ns
Speed	-.04 ns	-.23 05
Comprehension	-.15 ns	-.10 ns
Total	-.12 ns	-.18 ns
Reading Attitude		
SD Distance Measures:		
Me/My Reading	.51	.26
Me/Teaching Reading	.36	.19
My Reading/Worthwhile Activities	.20	.51
My Reading/Worthless Activities	.04	.07
Teaching Reading/Worthwhile Activities	.21	.28
Teaching Reading/Worthless Activities	.18	.09

* Adjustment scores are distance between self-ideal self and hence better adjustment indicated by smaller score - hence negative correlations with achievement scores (bigger is better) and positive correlations with reading attitudes scores (smaller is "higher" score).